

LEGISLATIVE GUERRILLAS A PUBLIC NECESSITY

AMOS CUMMINGS ON CONGRESS.

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Washington, D. C., May 23.—The legislative guerrilla is much in evidence. There is nothing particularly remarkable about his personal appearance, but his personality is comprehensive. He wears neither slashed jerkins nor trousers of Mexican cut, and he sports neither belt nor spurs; nor does he wear a sombrero with silver fringes. But he has the eye of an Empeinado and the dash of a La Rochejacquelin. Haunting the glades of legislation night and day, he heads formidable forays at unexpected moments, sallying from beneath the palm-trees like lightning, fighting desperately at close quarters, and dashing to cover with his plunder at the first opportunity. As alert as a fox-terrier, he is fully as vicious. At times he ambushes his victims, and ruthlessly robs them of their accoutrements. Anon he openly assaults them, battling manfully for victory. Nor is he above sneaking into camp at midnight and carrying off whatever strikes his fancy. He is ever on the flanks of the bulls of legislation, snapping and snarling like a prairie wolf, and cutting out the half-grown calves. His hearing is exceptionally acute, and his sense of danger almost intuitive. He lies under cover for days thirsty and hungry, awaiting an opportunity for a shot. The legislative guerrilla is ever wary and watchful. He is sleepless in energy, untiring in movement and electric of impulse. With all his care, however, he is sometimes caught napping. Sad is the day for him, for he neither expects nor receives mercy. While somewhat of a political outcast, the legislative guerrilla is usually loyal to his party. The fiercest and wickedest are Populists. They seem to take delight in torturing their victims, treating Democrats with a little more consideration than Republicans.

Probably the most famous of all the guerrillas in the last Congress was Jerry Simpson. There was no diplomacy about Jerry. He shot from under the fronds at all hours, whether the supplies were guarded or unguarded. His skill and dexterity were acknowledged by all. When Jerry appeared on the field everybody was on the qui vive, for it was bound to be a fight worth seeing. Indeed, the Kansas Jayhawker was so bold that he frequently made a dash at the Speaker himself, occasionally getting away with some of his paraphernalia. He dashed from cover last year toward the close of the session, and tilted straight for the Speaker's chair, and in a mood not placid. Jerry was in fine trim, and was put to his trumpet to avoid striking a foul parliamentary blow. He had been ordered to his seat once or twice for trespassing in the grass. In a very suave way he finally said that the presiding officer of the House reminded him of the story of a great Chinese philosopher who was asked this question by the Emperor, Fara Kwang: "Yang Poo, you have lived ninety years. In that time you must have accumulated a great deal of knowledge. What, in your opinion, is the greatest enemy to the government?"

"The rat in the statue," was the reply. Jerry's eyes were twinkling, and the speaker took a firm grip of the gavel, ready to rap him down if he transcended the bounds. "The rat in the statue?" the Emperor repeated. "What do you mean?" "You know that we build statues to our ancestors," the philosopher answered. "They are made out of wood and are hollow. When a rat gets inside and doesn't pull the statue in the water and drown him out, because it is glued together and would come apart. You can't smoke him out, because it would disfigure the image. The statue being sacred, the rat is safe. "Now that is the trouble with your allies," Jerry continued. "There is a rat inside of them, and they are so sacred that you can neither drown nor smoke him out. The speaker, by the power to appoint committees, becomes a sacred thing, because so many expect good places there that they all do good and worship." Mr. Reed laid down the gavel with a faintest suspicion of a smile, while Jerry's conferees awoke the echoes of the House.

Many encomiums have been passed on the personal appearance of James Hamilton Lewis. All were well deserved, and none did him full justice. As a legislative guerrilla he was really a thing of beauty and a joy forever. He wore a hussar's jacket, resplendent with gold lace and other military flummery, its exquisitely trimmed sleeve revealing about his left shoulder. His armed cap was an Oriental dream, and a light-fitting breeches and top boots traces of loveliness. Gold spurs attached his jeweled fingers, and with the great Sancy diamond flashing above his brow he would have recalled the eyes of Charles the Bold. No more shining cavalier ever turned guerrilla.

He began his predatory warfare forty-eight days after he was sworn in as a representative. It was in the extra session beginning March 15, 1897. The Dingley bill had passed the House with a word from Lewis. He did not vote for any candidate for Speaker, and aside from his graceful tout ensemble is entirely unknown in legislation. Early in May, however, he surprised the House by a coup d'etat. The Speaker had withheld the appointments of committees and the House was practically doing no business, except by unanimous consent. Under Governor Dingley's lead it was adjourning from May to the next session. By the action of the House, the Speaker was not appointing his committees. The Speaker, holding up the Senate and endeavoring to force prompt action on the Dingley bill, Joseph W. Bailey had been elected as the new leader of the minority.

Mr. Dingley had moved, to admit when Mr. Lewis arose at the desk of the House and shouted: "Mr. Speaker!" He was gorgeously arrayed and had the bearing of a bewhiskered ogre. If he had dropped from the clouds he could not have created a greater sensation. Dingley withdrew in motion, and Lewis sent to the clerk's desk a resolution declaring it the sense of the House that the committees authorized by Rule X should be appointed as soon as possible. He made a brilliant speech amid laughter and applause, urging the prompt passage of the resolution. As he sat down, Governor Dingley looked toward Mr. Lewis, saying: "Does the gentleman from Texas desire to say anything?" Bailey retorted with the words: "Does

the gentleman from Maine desire to say anything?"

The truth is that they were both opposed to the Lewis resolution. Bailey held that its passage would shift the responsibility for the existing situation from the Speaker to the majority of the House. Dingley probably held the same opinion, and wanted the responsibility shifted. In his guerrilla warfare Mr. Lewis was slashing at both sides of the House. The resolution was amended so as to direct the Speaker to immediately appoint the committees, and on this amendment Lewis got the yeas and nays. It was defeated by seventy-five majority. Bailey was right. All the Republicans voted against it and many Democrats, including Mr. Bailey himself. From that time Lewis carried on an incessant guerrilla raid. Charette was not more active in the Vendean war nor Mosby more ubiquitous in our civil war. In the most of his forays Lewis was assisted by Jerry Simpson. It was the greatest guerrilla warfare ever waged in our legislative annals.

To look at the placid, sacerdotal face of Judge H. H. Powers, of Vermont, no one would class him with legislative guerrillas. When Watchdog Holman was serving his last term in the House, Judge Powers turned guerrilla and unexpectedly swooped down upon the unexpecting Indian. The watchdog was barking at the proposition to pay members of the House mileage for the extra session. As usual, he was very pugnacious, and the whole pack of economists turned in behind him. He was making quite an impression, when Judge Powers, attired in full guerrilla costume, swooped down upon him. "Do I understand," said he, "that the gentleman from Indiana is opposed to granting mileage for the three sessions of this Congress?"

Holman twisted his eyeglasses with increased velocity before replying. The attack came from such an unexpected quarter that for a time he was non-plussed. "I favor standing by the law," he finally replied: "It provides for mileage at the rate of 20 cents per mile each way for each regular session of Congress."

"I suppose my friend did not hesitate to take three mileages himself in the Fifty-third Congress?" queried Judge Powers. This question plainly nettled the watchdog.

"Is that a matter that concerns you, my friend?" he asked.

"Certainly," the imperturbable answered the Vermont judge.

The watchdog took a fresh chew of tobacco and again began to twirl his glasses.

"Oh," said he with nervous sarcasm, "you may go and inquire of my family in reference to my domestic affairs."

The House twittered, but there was no smile on the face of Judge Powers. Its muscles retained their rigidity. In cold, calculating words, he replied: "The trouble is, your family is not here, and you are."

Holman shifted his glasses to his left hand. "Oh, my friend," he responded, "you are too solicitous—entirely too solicitous—yes, too solicitous."

"I only wanted to know if the gentleman had accepted the three mileages," Powers persisted with profound gravity.

"Well," snapped the watchdog, "you have announced your purpose to take the money, if it is appropriated, and that is sufficient."

"And I think you are going to take it, too," said Powers.

"And I suppose the gentleman would take even more than the three mileages, perhaps, if Congress forced them upon him," Holman retorted.

By this time half the members of the House were grouped around the guerrilla and his victim. All were agog and awaited further developments with intense interest. Henry H. Johnson remained in his seat, eagerly listening.

"What does the gentleman from Indiana say?" he repeatedly shouted over the heads of his Republican colleagues.

The gentleman from Indiana makes no answer to impertinent questions. Holman replied, as his time expired.

The House was in ecstasies. The Vermont guerrilla had not only destroyed the effect of Holman's speech, but had driven him back to cover.

Legislative guerrillas in the House are to-day as active as ever. One of the most persistent is John P. Fitzgerald, of Massachusetts. All his raids seem to be made with a view of benefiting the important city of Boston. He attacks every appropriation bill with the frequency of a paynim in an effort to secure benefit for his constituents.

Nor does he rest content with this. He carries his onslaught into committee rooms, and, failing there, battles energetically in the House for what he wants. Ever circling on the outskirts of legislation, he dashes right and left in his forays, to the surprise and consternation of all having charge of appropriation bills. His fights over the naval and postoffice appropriations were persistent and unceasing. Fitzgerald is the Catharine of legislative guerrillas in the House in more ways than one, for he fights for orthodoxy in denominational matters as fiercely as he fights for the Hub.

The warfare of the guerrillas in the House is continuous. One of the most daring is Edwin Reed Ridgely, of Kansas. His steed is ever on the gallop, and his sword flashes in the sun in many a skirmish. There is also a Marion among them in the person of Prof. W. Jasper Talbert, of Parkville, Mo. C. Jeff Thompson is also represented by Willard D. Vandiver, of Cape Girardeau, and Jeff himself could not do better in a lively bout. Tennessee, also, has a rare old guerrilla in Nicholas Cox, of Franklin. He deals sturdy blows without fear or favor, always acting on behalf of the people. Take them all in all, they are a wonderful organization of disorganizers. Their bugles are heard at all times and in all places. The tramp of their steeds at the close of the hounding legislative day has an exhilarating effect. It lightens the burdens of committee work, and gives zest to the appetite.

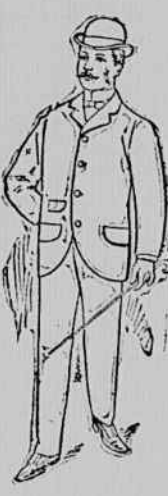
Nor is this guerrilla warfare confined to the House. The Senate has its Hofsers and its John Morgans. Tillman, of South Carolina, is a terror, when, armed with a pitchfork and mounted on a blooded horse, he charges upon the bodyguard of established precedents. Nor is Butler, of North Carolina, a whit behind him in North Carolina enterprise. The greatest of all, however, comes from the Granite Hills of New

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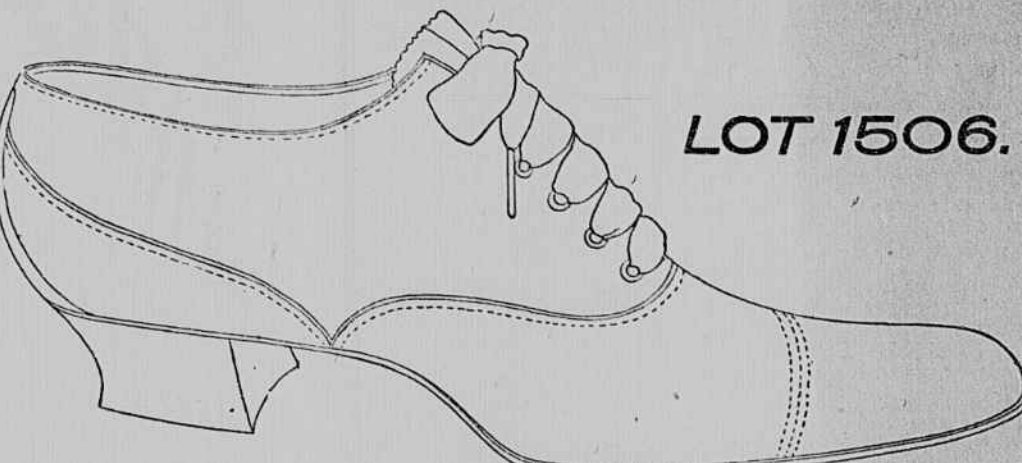
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